

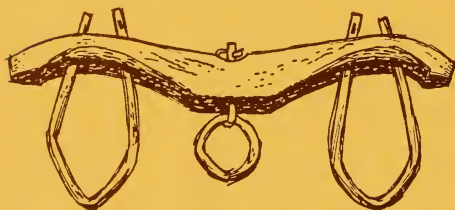
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Lincoln in some of his unheroic
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LINCOLN

In Some of His Unheroic Hours



Paper by

JACOB LOUIS HASBROUCK

Before the Rotary Club of Bloomington, Illinois

FEBRUARY 10, 1938

Abraham Lincoln lived on this earth 56 years, 2 months and 3 days. Delivery of his famous address at Gettysburg occupied not to exceed 15 minutes of his life span.

Twice he was elected president, and twice he delivered inaugural addresses. The first probably consumed about 45 minutes. The second perhaps not over 25 to 30 minutes.

When nominated twice for the presidency, he presented to proper spokesmen of the conventions his acceptances. The first time at Springfield on May 23, 1860, Lincoln's remarks to a committee from the Chicago convention could not have occupied more than 5 minutes. On his second nomination in 1864 by the Baltimore convention, he uttered not over a half dozen sentences to a delegation visiting him at the white house.

Lincoln freed the slaves. The mechanics of that historic action consisted of two short proclamations, the first giving the rebel states warning; the second confirming the proposal of the first and declaring that as a matter of military necessity all slaves in the rebel states should be forever afterward free. The time consumed in writing these proclamations might have been not more than an hour.

You all know that Lincoln debated with Douglas in the campaign for senator in 1858. There were seven of these debates, in seven cities of Illinois, each consuming perhaps three hours—a total of 21 hours. In launching this campaign, Lincoln uttered at the Republican state convention at Springfield his famous house-divided-against-itself speech, a short address, of perhaps 30 minutes.

On May 29, 1856, Lincoln uttered in Bloomington what has since been known as his lost speech. Coming at the end of a day's convention before a body of weary delegates, it probably lasted not over 30 to 40 minutes.

In these instances I have mentioned were perhaps included the chief events which have won Lincoln immortal fame. The total elapsed time of them all was perhaps not over a half dozen days.

What, then was Lincoln doing in the hours, days, months and years when he was not saying or doing things of imperishable significance?

Lincoln's life was largely spent in something of the same way that you and I spend our time—in trivial, meaningless routine, of which few even of our friends are aware, and of which history makes no record. But because of the immortal renown attaching to the great hours of Lincoln's life, his most trivial acts have since attained some concern for mankind. From the preserved records of his countless routine actions and utterances may we for a few minutes note some unconnected events, experiences and words.

Early in Politics

Lincoln was a politician, from the time he was 23 years old. For 14 years of the last 33 years of his life he was in public office. Although he had never attended school, don't fool yourself in thinking that when on March 9, 1832 at New Salem he announced that he was a candidate for the legislature, that he was then an unknown ignoramus. Brought up in the poverty and hardships of backwoods life in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, he had managed with a few books and assiduous self discipline to develop his reasoning faculties, and to attain a local prominence for his ability to "arguefy" with his neighbors on any public issue. In short, at 23 Lincoln was better schooled in the affairs of his day than is the average youth of 23 today, college graduate though he be.

Lincoln's first platform was simple. He opposed spending \$290,000 to build a railroad from the Illinois river thru Jacksonville to Springfield. Instead he favored improving navigation of the Sangamon river from Springfield to its mouth. He was against loaning money at high rates of interest. He announced these principles, as he said, "with the modesty which should attend youth." Like every politician, he promised if elected to work for the interests of the dear people; but if defeated, "I am so familiar with disappointments as to be not very much chagrined."

He went away as captain of a militia company to the Black Hawk war shortly afterward, and returned only two weeks before the election. In consequence he was defeated for office. But two years later he ran again, was elected and was re-elected three times afterward, serving four terms or 8 years.

Mr. Lincoln was elected to the legislature again, in 1854, after he had returned from his service in congress; but he resigned before meeting of the session for which he was elected.

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This job in the legislature was held by Lincoln longer than any other he ever filled—longer than his two years in congress and the little over 4 years in the presidency. In the 37 years since organization of the present 26th district, only two men from this district have served as long as Lincoln did from the Sangamon district.

Romance of Mary Owens

It was an important transition period of his life. As one of the famous Long Nine members of the house, he cast his vote for moving the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield, and he followed the capital to make his home in Springfield. He studied law while in the legislature—and he got married in his last term. He made few speeches. But one significant action he took. In connection with another member, Dan Stone, he filed a written protest against action of the house on the subject of “domestic slavery,” which he said was founded on injustice and bad policy, but declaring that arguing for abolition at this time tends rather to increase than abate its present evils.

While a member of the legislature, Lincoln paid one of his earlier visits to Bloomington—and suffered terribly from toothache while here. On record is a letter he dated at Bloomington on Sept. 27, 1841, written to Miss Mary Speed in Kentucky recalling a recent visit he had made at her home, and adding: “Do you remember my going to the city when I was in Kentucky to have a tooth extracted and making a failure of it? Well, that same old tooth got to paining me so much that I had it torn out, bringing with it a piece of the jawbone, the consequence of which is that my mouth is now so sore that I can neither talk nor eat.”

I have said that Lincoln was married while a member of the legislature. It was his third sweetheart whom he married. He took Mary Todd for his wife when he had reached the ripe old age of 33 years. You all know of Ann Rutledge, his first love, whose death at the age of 19 cast Lincoln into a state of mental gloom.

Between Ann Rutledge and Mary Todd, however, was another girl, Mary Owens by name, who came into and passed out of the life of Lincoln in one of the strangest chapters of his career.

Mary Owens was a big fat girl—and perhaps that explains why, unlike Ann Rutledge, she has never had any streamlined trains named for her. Description of Mary Owens as a corpulent person is on record over Lincoln's own signature, in a letter written to Mrs. O. H. Browning, who was a motherly adviser to Lincoln at this period. Lincoln had met Mary some time earlier on a visit to Kentucky, and when he heard that Mary was coming to Illinois with a married sister he was pleased. He did not try, however, to paint for her a false picture of life. In one letter to her he wrote: “I often think of what you said about your coming to Springfield to live. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing it. You would have to be poor without means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently?”

But Mary came to Springfield just the same, and Lincoln tried to be nice to her. He did not take her to the movies, nor for automobile rides, for there were no autos, nor movies. At any rate, he carried on a sort of courtship with her until he felt that he must jilt the girl, or ask her to marry him. Let him tell the rest of the story, in his letter to Mrs. Browning:

"After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do, I concluded I might as well bring it to a conclusion without further delay. So I mustered my resolution and made the proposal to her direct. But shocking to relate, she answered, No. I found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. My vanity was deeply wounded by reflection that I had been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me, with all my fancied greatness. And to cap the whole, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was really in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by girls; but in this instance I made a fool of myself. I have come now to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me."

Within three or four years after writing this letter, Lincoln had married Mary Todd. With marriage came for them the same questions that come to all young married couples—setting up housekeeping, babies and everything. In one of the many letters he wrote to Joshua Speed at this period he mentions the "coming event" in his family, adding: "By the way, do events of this kind come on in your family? Are you possessing houses and lands and oxen and asses, and men servants and maid servants, and begetting sons and daughters?"

The coming event which he had mentioned came along all right, and some four years later, the year after he was elected to congress he wrote to Speed again: "We have another boy, born on March 10th. He is very much such a child as Bob was at his age, rather of a longer order. Bob is short and low and I expect always will be. Bob talks quite plainly and is quite smart. I sometimes fear he is one of the little rare-ripe sort that are smarter at 5 than ever afterward."

His Term in Congress

If you had happened to be in Washington about the year 1847-48, and had approached the entrance to the house of representatives, meeting a member emerging from the hall, this colloquy might have occurred:

"Who is the tall, rawboned man down there with the Illinois delegation?" "Him? Why, that's Spot Lincoln." "What do you mean, Spot Lincoln? I know a man out in Illinois, but we call him Abe Lincoln." "That's the same fellow but we all call him Spot around here."

How did Lincoln get the nickname of Spot while he was in congress? The Mexican war was on, and it was debatable then, and is now, whether that was a war of conquest or a war of self defense. Who

started the shooting and why? President James K. Polk, who approved the war, was a Democrat; Abe Lincoln was a Whig. Perhaps there was politics in it, but more likely Lincoln had a genuine desire for information when he presented a resolution in the house asking that the President give the house information on several questions, such as: "Was the particular spot on which the blood of our citizens was first shed at that time on our own soil? Was the SPOT within the territory wrested from Spain? Was the SPOT within or without the settlement of our own people?" and so on.

Lincoln never got anywhere with his resolution, but the Democrats tagged him with the name of SPOT, and that name stuck to him.

Ten years later, in the first of his debates with Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln was accused by Douglas with being a traitor to his country. For, said Douglas, when Lincoln was in congress he refused to vote arms and supplies for our army to fight against a foreign foe. This charge aroused Lincoln like a wounded lion. When he arose to reply, he ripped into Douglas, showing by the record that while he had questioned the righteousness of the war's inception, he had never withheld his voice or vote from supplying our army with means to carry on a successful campaign. So completely did he refute Douglas' cowardly charge, that in subsequent debates Douglas dropped the subject like a hot potato.

While Lincoln was still green in the ways of congress, he wrote to Herndon, his law partner in Springfield: "By way of getting the hang of the house I made a little speech yesterday. I find speaking here and elsewhere about the same. I was no more scared than when speaking in court."

Political Tactics

In congress, Lincoln made a little speech at another time, perhaps the only time in his life when he deliberately tried to get funny. Gen. Lewis Cass was then Democratic candidate for president and was being touted as a great Indian fighter.

Lincoln arose one day and said: "Mr. Speaker, did you know that I am a military man? Yes, sir, in the days of the Black Hawk war I fought and bled and came back. Speaking of Gen. Cass' career reminds me of my own. I was not at Stillman's defeat, but I was about as near to it as Cass was to Hill's surrender. I did not break my record, for I had none to break, but I once bent my musket. If Gen. Cass saw any live, fighting Indians, it was more than I did, but I had a great many bloody battles with mosquitoes. I never fainted from loss of blood, but I was often very hungry."

Gen. Zachary Taylor, hero of the Mexican war, was Whig candidate for president against Cass. The Democrats accused the Whigs of trying to ride into office on the military coattails of Gen. Taylor.

One day, Lincoln replied to such a charge with these words: "Can the gentleman from Georgia remember no other military coattails under which a certain other party sought shelter for nearly a quarter of a

century? Has he no acquaintance with the ample coattails of Gen. Andrew Jackson? Does he not know that his own party has run five presidential races under that coattail and is now running the sixth? That coattail was used by Gen. Jackson himself and has been clung to by every Democratic candidate since. You twice made a president of him and also made presidents of five other comparatively small men by that means and are trying now to make another."

Lincoln having gained a place in congress, not only were his political prospects better, but it must have been thought his financial conditions likewise. His relatives were appealing to him for money.

To his father he once wrote: "I very cheerfully send you the \$20 which you say is necessary to save the land from sale. Before you pay, it would be well to be sure you have not already paid it. Give my love to mother and all the connections."

Lincoln had a sort of no-good step-brother who also wanted money at this time. To him Lincoln wrote: "You say you would almost give your place in heaven for \$70 or \$80. Then you value your place in heaven very cheap. You say if I will furnish you the money you will deed me the land. Nonsense. If you can't now live with the land, how will you live without it? You have always been kind to me and I do not mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will follow my advice it will be worth more than 80 times \$80 to you."

As Bloomington Lawyer

Lincoln's only term in congress was not a brilliant experience, and returning home he gave himself to hard work in his profession.

Lincoln practiced law in Bloomington—and how! On days when Judge David Davis held sessions of his itinerant court here, did Lincoln from his suburban home come rolling downtown in a splendiferous motor car? Dismissing his chauffeur did he step into the elevator of a fine office building, to be whisked to the fifth, sixth or seventh story, where he entered his handsome suite of offices? Setting his big boots down on the oriental rug, did he glance with pride over his fine law library along three sides of the room? and finally did he say a cheery good morning to his private secretary, a lovely girl with permanent wave, rouged lips and painted finger nails?

He did not. Life was hard in Bloomington and in the other county seats. In Bloomington Lincoln generally stayed in a barren boarding house or the hardly less barren old Phoenix hotel. The court house in which he practiced was a square two story brick on the site of the present one. It was succeeded in 1868 by the third building on the same site and in 1901 by the present structure.

So far as I can find, there is not now a scrap of paper in the court house files which is in Lincoln's handwriting. According to tradition, there were some Lincoln papers stored in the attic of the third court house which was ruined in the 1900 big fire. One day I clawed and dug into charred boxes of these old papers long afterward, but found no

papers of older date than 1871, which was six years after Lincoln's death and a dozen years after he last appeared in court here.

But there is one immortal Lincoln document which indisputably had its inception in the Bloomington court house. It is the famous autobiography written by Lincoln in response to a request of Jesse W. Fell for materials for newspaper publication after Lincoln began to be mentioned as a possible candidate for president.

Judge Lawrence Weldon of Bloomington, contemporary of Lincoln and Jesse Fell, in a paper concerning Mr. Fell after his death wrote this: "Shortly after the campaign of 1858, Mr. Lincoln was attending court in Bloomington, and as Mr. Fell had conceived the idea that it would be good policy to have something in the form of a biography of him for publication in eastern papers, he called on him in the court room and suggested that he prepare a statement of the leading incidents of his life. At the instance of Mr. Fell, Mr. Lincoln while sitting at a desk in the old court room prepared the short yet comprehensive autobiography which has been so extensively published since his death. It is the only thing left on record by Mr. Lincoln giving the facts of his early life and career which culminated in the lasting glory of his name."

Paul M. Angle, secretary of the Illinois State Historical society, questions the accuracy of this story. He says Lincoln's autobiography was written by Lincoln in Springfield and mailed to Mr. Fell in Bloomington, with an accompanying short note.

With no official status as a Lincoln historian, I may venture to say that both versions may have been partly right. Mr. Fell may have seen Lincoln in the court room here as related by Judge Weldon; Lincoln may have written his autobiography on a sheet of foolscap paper borrowed from the clerk of the court. Then, perhaps, Lincoln, not seeing Fell in the court room, put the paper in his pocket and that night returned home to Springfield. Next day finding the paper in his pocket or saddlebags, Lincoln may have sat down in Springfield, wrote the short note and mailed it to Mr. Fell at Bloomington. So perhaps both Judge Weldon and Mr. Angle may have been partly right.

The tablet at the east door of the present court house, placed by the D. A. R. says that the autobiography was written in the building which stood on this site; and of course the D. A. R. ladies cannot be wrong.

When Alice and Fannie Fell still lived in Normal, before their removal to California, I was visiting them one day on other business, when they took from the safe in their home the original paper on which Lincoln had written his autobiography. It was a sheet of old fashioned yellowish foolscap paper, and Lincoln's handwriting filled two whole pages and about half of the third. That document is now owned by Mrs. Harriet Fyffe Richardson of Milwaukee, granddaughter of Jesse Fell, whose intention, I understand, is eventually to deposit it in the library of congress in Washington.

The Lost Speech

I have mentioned the famous lost speech of Lincoln in Bloomington, when reporters for Chicago and St. Louis papers sat enthralled under his eloquence and forgot to take notes. But how about The Pantagraph, the newspaper right here on the ground? Did no Pantagraph reporter hear the Lincoln speech, and if so, did he lose it also?

The Pantagraph was then a weekly paper—published every Wednesday. The convention was held on Thursday. Therefore six days passed from the date of the convention, May 29, to the next issue of the Pantagraph, June 4. News six days old is pretty old stuff, even for a weekly paper. But The Pantagraph did print a half column story of the convention, which was not referred to as a Whig convention nor a Republican meeting—it was called an Anti-Nebraska convention. The Pantagraph news story began thus:

“The delegates to the Anti-Nebraska convention last Thursday came in crowds from all parts of the state; and we never saw such unanimity and enthusiasm manifested in a similar assembly. Opposition to the aggressive movement of the slave power seemed to move all.”

The story then recounts the details of the meeting. Then we come to the last paragraph referring to the lost speech. It reads thus:

“Several most heart stirring and powerful speeches were made during the convention; but without being invidious we must say that Mr. Lincoln on Thursday evening surpassed all others—even himself. His points were unanswerable, and the force and power of his appeals irresistible—and were received by a storm of applause.”

That was the only record in The Pantagraph of the much advertised lost speech.

I shall not attempt to speak at length of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, which formed the chief political episode of Lincoln's life in the two years following the Bloomington convention. However, there is on record a letter which Lincoln wrote from Ottawa on the day after the first debate, held in that town, in which he said:

“Douglas and I for the first time in this canvass crossed swords here yesterday. The fire flew some, and I am glad to know that I am yet alive. There was a vast concourse of people—more than could get near enough to hear.”

Two generations after the Civil war sang about John Brown's body mouldering in the grave while his soul goes marching on. But Abraham Lincoln thought that the hanging of John Brown served him right, and he told some other men of his day that a similar fate might await them, if—

In a speech at Leavenworth, Kansas, in December, 1859, two weeks after John Brown was hanged by the state of Virginia because he organized an armed force to seize the government arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Lincoln addressed some very pointed remarks to the Democrats who might be in his audience, saying:

"Your own statement is that if the Black Republicans elect a president you won't stand it—you will break up the union. If we shall constitutionally elect a president, it will be our duty to see that you submit. Old John Brown has been executed for treason against a state. We cannot object, even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed and treason. So, if we constitutionally elect a president, and therefore you attempt to destroy the union, it will be our duty to deal with you as old John Brown has been dealt with. We hope and believe that in no section will a majority so act as to render such extreme measures necessary."

Less than six months after this speech, Lincoln was the nominee for president by the Black Republicans.

How He Heard Nomination

You are all familiar with the story of the famous Wigwam convention in Chicago, in May, 1860, when Lincoln was nominated for president. You know the story of the remarkable job of boosting by his Bloomington friends, Jesse Fell, David Davis, Leonard Swett and others, who even packed the galleries with Lincoln rooters so successfully that they out yelled all the other factions.

Where was Lincoln, and what was he doing during the exciting days of the convention? He was at home in Springfield, but of course was following with tense interest the course of the convention. He met with a group of close friends at the office of the Springfield Journal, where the only bulletin service from the convention was to be had—picked out by a telegraph operator in the old dot and dash system.

The operator was in an inner room while the anxious group waited for frequent bulletins in an adjoining room. Each succeeding ballot showed Lincoln gaining on his chief rival, Seward.

The climax came when the telegrapher stepped from his room with a solemn face, holding a sheet of paper in his hand. With mock solemnity he announced: "The convention has made its nomination. On the third and final ballot, WILLIAM H. SEWARD"—then a pause, and he shouted: "was second. Hurrah for Abraham Lincoln, the next president of the United States."

While the news quickly spread around the streets, Lincoln and his little coterie of friends walked over to his house on Eighth street to break the news to Mrs. Lincoln.

Glimpses of Presidency

In the presidency, you might think that Lincoln would have been freed from a multitude of routine, inconsequential matters. On the contrary, they multiplied a hundred fold. Official archives clearly prove this.

Lincoln had a war on his hands—but the Civil war was a sort of funny little war, a war of amateurs, compared with the World war with its vast numbers of men engaged and the magnitude of operations.

Civil war commanders seemed to maintain with the President in

the white house a peculiarly personal and intimate relationship which would be unthinkable in our day in any war. They seemed to expect, and the President was not slow to give, advice about operations in the field—when to attack or retreat, when to cross a river or cross back again, what general should reinforce what other general, and when and how—what to do to trap the enemy and how to prevent his escape from the trap.

There are preserved literally hundreds of messages sent by Lincoln to his generals suggesting or ordering them to do this or that, and scores of times would be added this note: "This is a suggestion, not an order."

Not more than two months after Fort Sumter fell, a certain dashing young West Point graduate, George B. McClellan, led a small army of raw recruits across the Ohio river south, driving the rebels out of the western part of Virginia and saving for the union the area afterward admitted to the union as the state of West Virginia.

Gen. McClellan sprang into fame overnight, a regular young Napoleon. Yielding to the pressure of public sentiment, Lincoln appointed Gen. McClellan head of the forces in the east, known as the Army of the Potomac. It was then his troubles began.

McClellan seemed willing to rest on his laurels and fame as a young Napoleon, doing little to enhance his fame by further action. For the next year or more he spent most of his time offering excuses for not taking effective action against the enemy. Recruits were poured into his command until he had an army of some 150,000 men, while the rebels, according to best reports did not have half that many.

On one occasion, President Lincoln personally visited army headquarters, learned the strength of the forces, then went back and checked with records of the war department, showing a discrepancy of about 35,000 men.

Lincoln wrote McClellan a sharp note demanding whether he had allowed 35,000 of his soldiers to go home on vacations while he was facing the enemy. On another occasion, coming from a cabinet meeting where the inaction of the army of the Potomac was again under discussion, Lincoln remarked to his secretary of war: "If General McClellan has no use for the army of the Potomac, I would like to borrow it awhile."

After putting up with the dilatory actions of General McClellan for a year and a half, during which the union army had suffered several bad defeats, Lincoln reluctantly relieved him of command and sent him back to an interior post of small responsibility.

McClellan bobbed up again to plague Lincoln as the opposition candidate for president in the election of 1864, on a platform which threatened to undo all that Lincoln had up to that time done to save the union.

McClellan gave way to General Burnside, who lasted only a couple of months, and he in turn to Hooker, Halleck and Meade in turn.

In making General Hooker head of the army, President Lincoln wrote him a letter in which these sentences occur: "I have heard, in a way which makes me believe it, that you say both the army and the government need a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it,

that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success and I will risk the dictatorship." And in a fine vein of sarcasm referring to former lack of action, Lincoln concluded: "And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories."

Six months later, Lincoln cautioned General Hooker against getting caught in a surprise attack from Lee's army while his own army was astraddle of the Rappahannock river, half on one side, half on the other "like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs in front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other."

Having run the campaigns of his eastern generals for two years, Lincoln must have begun to think that had got to be quite a military strategist. But out on the fighting front of the southwest was another general, Grant by name, to whom Lincoln took off his hat in acknowledgement that he was better. Ten days after Grant had captured Vicksburg, Lincoln wrote him a letter which began thus: "My dear general: I do not remember that you and I ever met personally."

Then Lincoln outlined a plan of campaign which he had thought Grant should have adopted when he attacked Vicksburg, but which Grant had not adopted, and Lincoln concluded his letter thus: "I now wish to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right and I was wrong." That was the opening of relations by Lincoln with the man who was to become his strong right arm in finally crushing the rebellion.

The Supreme Court

What have we here? The supreme court! The issue of the supreme court confronted Lincoln before he had been in office six months. There were three vacancies in the court at the same time. Here was a fine chance for Lincoln to pack the court with his own political friends, who thought as he did on slavery and other questions.

Did Lincoln pack the court? No, he sought advice of congress. In his first annual message to congress, he said on this subject: "I have been unwilling to throw all the appointments to the north, thus disabling myself from doing justice to the south on the return of peace." Contending that certain changes in the court were advisable Lincoln cautioned against enlarging the court, so making it too numerous for a judicial body of any sort. Doesn't that have a familiar sound today?

After nearly a year's deliberation, Lincoln filled the three vacancies on the court, for one of them coming right here to Bloomington and appointing our own Judge David Davis, who served 15 years thereafter on the court and then resigned to become senator.

Lincoln was 70 years ahead of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in doing something for the farmers. In his first annual message to congress, he cited that "agriculture has not a department nor a bureau in the government, but a clerkship only." He added: "While it is fortunate that this great interest is so independent in its nature as not to have demanded or extorted more from the government, I respectfully ask congress to consider whether something more cannot be given voluntarily with general

advantage. While I make no suggestion in detail, I venture the opinion that an agricultural and statistical bureau might be profitably organized."

Five months later, in May, 1862, congress passed the act creating the department of agriculture. A year later Lincoln told congress of the fine start of the department and expressed the hope that it would "meet the fondest anticipations of its most sanguine friends."

If Lincoln could come back today and see the agricultural department with its tens of thousands of employes, and reaching its regulating hands to every farm and plantation in the country, he might exclaim: "How my child has grown."

His Slavery Policy

The greatest disappointment to Lincoln in his presidency was his failure to do what he wanted to do about slavery. He put his heart into the effort, but he failed.

What he wanted to do about slavery was to buy the slaves and set them free. Buy them with what? With money from the United States treasury. He proposed that the federal government pay the money to the states and the states buy slaves from individual owners and set them free.

Is that any surprising proposition to us of today when we see the federal government pouring billions of dollars into the states for building roads, for relief and a multitude of purposes?

To buy the slaves would cost millions, yes. But the cost would be less than to carry on a war of unknown duration, Lincoln contended. He had been in office just a year when he laid his plan before congress, on March 6, 1862. He proposed a joint resolution for gradual emancipation of the slaves by the government giving "pecuniary aid" to the states for that purpose. He closed his plea with these words: "In full view of my great responsibility to my God and my country I earnestly beg the attention of congress and the people to this subject."

Before news of this proposal became generally known, some of Lincoln's generals tried to beat him to it. Gen. Fremont and Gen. David Hunter issued military orders that all slaves within the respective territories under their jurisdiction should be set free."

This aroused Lincoln to issue a public proclamation repudiating this action of his commanders, saying that if and when it became necessary to free the slaves as a military necessity, the order would come from him as commander in chief of the military forces, and not from any commanders in the field.

Congress was apathetic toward Lincoln's proposal to buy up the slaves and set them free, which Lincoln argued would automatically end the war, since the war was caused by slavery, and if slavery were ended there would be no further cause for continuing the war. As the session of congress was about to adjourn he called a conference of members from the border states and pled with them to go back home and "sell" the idea of gradual compensated emancipation. In August he wrote to Horace Greeley that famous letter in which he said:

"If I could save the union by freeing some of the slaves and leaving others alone, I would do it. If I could save the union by freeing all the slaves I would do it; if I could save the union without freeing a slave, I would do it. Whatever I do about slavery I do because I believe it would help to save the union."

Came Sept. 22, and Lincoln, after long debate with his cabinet issued the proclamation of warning to the rebel states that if after 100 days they were still in rebellion, the military order of emancipation would be issued.

Again in December as congress met in regular session, midway between the warning proclamation and the zero hour for its enforcement, Lincoln again pleaded with congress for buying the slaves and setting them free—this time on the installment plan, over a period of 38 years. The closing period of this message in my opinion rivals the Gettysburg address in its simple eloquence. As a final argument for the suggested plan of gradual compensated emancipation, President Lincoln said to congress:

"In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom for the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may fail; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which if followed the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless."

If that plan had been adopted, the last payment for freeing the slaves would have been made in the year 1900, the year of the big Bloomington fire, and 35 years after Lincoln's death.

Congress did nothing about it. Time marched on, and at the zero hour, Jan. 1, 1863, the final proclamation of emancipation as a military order was issued.

It did not make a great hit in the north and was greeted with ridicule in the south. Our own legislature of Illinois, Lincoln's home state, passed a resolution Jan. 5, four days after the proclamation to the effect that "the emancipation proclamation of the President is as unwarrantable in the military as in the civil law."

Public sentiment slowly veered to support of Lincoln. The political convention which nominated him for a second term in 1864 adopted a plank in its platform favoring a constitutional amendment forever abolishing slavery. Such an amendment was enacted in December, 1865, nine months after his death.

About Mrs. Lincoln

Mrs. Lincoln, wife of the President, must have been a person rather hard to get along with. This is not a bit of historical gossip; it is in the record. Some of Lincoln's notes and messages to and concerning Mrs. Lincoln but ill concealed the irritation which he must have suffered on her account. Mrs. Lincoln spent considerable time visiting friends in nearby cities. On one such visit in Philadelphia, in June, 1863, Lincoln sent her this message: "Think you had better put away Tad's pistol. I had an ugly dream about him."

In September, the same year, Mrs. Lincoln while in New York must have got a report of an epidemic, plague or something raging in Washington and she hesitated to return home. Lincoln tried to reassure her with this message: "I neither see nor hear of sickness here. I wish you to come or stay as is most agreeable to you." Two days later he sent this wire: "The air is so cool and healthy that I would be glad to have you come. Nothing very particular, but I would be glad to see you—and Tad."

Everything must have turned out all right, for a few days later Lincoln sent this message to a friend of Mrs. Lincoln's in Baltimore: "Mrs. Lincoln is now home and would be pleased to see you any time."

Mrs. Lincoln's kinfolks were all from the south, and perhaps some of them were suspected of being rebel sympathizers. In October, 1863, one of these relations showed up in Washington looking for a job. Lincoln sent the applicant to the secretary of the treasury with a letter which read in part: "This is one of Mrs. Lincoln's numerous cousins. His father was a brother of Mrs. Lincoln's mother. I know not a thing about his loyalty beyond what he says. Supposing he is loyal, can any of requests be granted, and if any, which of them?"

The Second Term

Right at a critical juncture of the war came the presidential election of 1864. We might have expected Lincoln to turn over conduct of the war to some of his secretaries or his generals, and get out on the stump to get himself nominated and elected for a second term. Did he do that?

Well, hardly. Read the record of his writings for a year prior to the election, and you will find scarcely any references to politics.

Of course, he was not unaware of political forecasts. As early as October, 1863, in a letter to Elihu B. Washburne, Lincoln thanked him for "your kind words and intentions." "A second term," Lincoln wrote, "would be a great honor and a great labor, which, together perhaps I would not decline if tendered."

Came the Baltimore convention in June. Did the man in the white house write the platform, to be rubber stamped by the convention? Did he name the man for vice president, expecting the convention's unquestioned okay? Here are his own words to political friends two days before the convention: "Wish not to interfere about vice president. Cannot interfere about platform. Convention must judge for itself."

Being notified by a committee that he had been nominated, Lincoln's response contained these words: "I know no reason to doubt that I shall accept, and yet perhaps I should not declare definitely before reading and considering what is called the platform." Three weeks later he wrote a letter of brief but formal acceptance, with no discussion of political issues.

Replying to a delegation of the National Union league which called to congratulate him on his nomination, he said in part: "I have not permitted myself to conclude that I am the best man in the country;

but I am reminded of an old Dutch farmer who remarked to a companion once that "it is not best to swap horses when crossing a stream."

Lincoln went off on something of a lark the first days of April, 1865. The war was virtually won. The terrible load of uncertainty and anxiety as to the outcome was lifted from his shoulders, so he took Mrs. Lincoln and his son Tad and went down to City Point, Va., the base headquarters of Gen. Grant's army to be nearer the closing scenes of the great war drama. Gen. Grant, out there in front driving the rebels into their last corner, sent daily messages back to Lincoln at headquarters. Lincoln relayed them to the secretary of war at Washington, explaining: "I have very little to do here, hence will send these messages to you."

Apparently Secretary Stanton had warned Lincoln of personal danger if he got too near the front, especially to keep away from Petersburg. Lincoln replied: "Thanks for your caution, but I have already been to Petersburg. Stayed with Gen. Grant an hour and a half and then returned here."

Along with thousands of rebel prisoners taken by the union forces many flags captured from the rebels were brought into headquarters. These apparently were held under orders of the secretary of war. Lincoln once telegraphed the secretary: "Tad would like a few flags. Can he be accommodated?"

Final Tragedy

Oh, my God! Here is a blank page, with a splotch of blood on it. Just one of the pages meant for the chronicle of the routine matters in the President's day's work.

Turning back to the preceding page we find a small notation in Lincoln's handwriting—only a memorandum of an appointment with his friend George Ashmun of Massachusetts, the same man who was chairman of the 1860 convention which first nominated Lincoln for President. Just a few minutes before Lincoln set out with a party of happy friends for an evening of pleasure at the theater, he penned a few words on a slip of paper to be left with the white house secretary. Here are the words he wrote:

"Have Mr. Ashmun and friend come in to see me at 9 o'clock tomorrow."

Tomorrow? THAT tomorrow never dawned for Abraham Lincoln. At the hour he had appointed to meet Mr. Ashmun he lay dead in a little boarding house just across the street from the theater where an assassin's bullet struck him down.

What a sorrowful and prolonged leavetaking did his countrymen give him! It seemed that even in death they were loath to let him go. It was just 19 days from the early morning hour when Lincoln breathed his last in Washington until that other early morning hour when his funeral train passed through Normal and Bloomington on the last lap of Lincoln's journey home. An Associated Press reporter on the train noted signs of mourning at every station when the train stopped or

passed. In Normal he saw a great arch built at the station with these words: "Gone to Thy Rest."

What happened in Bloomington may be told in the words of the local reporter for The Pantagraph:

"The bells of our city made sufficient noise about 3 o'clock Wednesday morning to awaken nearly every man, woman and child in town. Crowds of people soon lined the sidewalks toward the depot of the Chicago, Alton & St. Louis railroad to witness the passage of the funeral train which bore the remains of President Lincoln. Although there was no systematic display, that there was a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy was taken for granted by the assembling of three or four thousand people at such an early hour. The train did not arrive till after sunrise and stopped but a few minutes, and there was little satisfaction in gazing briefly at the funeral train.

"It is greatly to be regretted that our citizens have not made more signs of mourning. The only conspicuous object was the beautiful silk flag of Engine Co. No. 2 draped in mourning. After having seen such striking manifestations all along the route, those who accompanied the train must have been surprised that a town which almost claimed Mr. Lincoln as a citizen should not have made more demonstration of sorrow. The inference will be either that our grief is deeper than elsewhere or else that we have another illustration of the adage that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country. We expect to see a scathing rebuke by the telegraphic reporters on the train."

An hour or so after the train passed Bloomington, Lincoln was back home in Springfield, where four years previously he had said goodbye to his fellow citizens in a short address, which contained these prophetic words: "I leave now, not knowing when, or whether EVER I may return."

These unconnected glimpses of some of the intimate moments of his life do not explain the mystery of Lincoln. True, he spent the greater part of his life in meaningless routine, even as you and I. But how great the contrast! When WE shall have finished our routine existence, our names may be remembered by those who survive us hardly long enough to be chiseled by them upon some bit of stone to be set on a grassy knoll where we shall sleep away our dreamless years.

But Lincoln, led by Destiny's mystic hand, emerged from the drab level of the commonplace, to attain in his greater hours an immortal renown—an immortality which even yet on every day of every year brings pilgrims to pay him almost reverential honors in that stately and flag-draped mausoleum where his body rests in Oak Ridge—pilgrims not only from all the states of that union which his labors preserved, but pilgrims—many of them—from the far ends of the earth.

Thus it is today, 72 years after Lincoln's death; and thus, we may believe, it shall ever be, as long as stands our republic, to which he sealed his devotion with a martyr's blood!

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LINCOLN IN SOME OF HIS UNHEROIC HOURS, P



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